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AUTHOR	Gebhard, Jerry G.
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IDENTIFIERS	*Indiana University of Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

Ways that teacher educators can provide opportunities for novice teachers to develop their beliefs about teaching and learning and their teaching practices are discussed. It is suggested that practical teaching experience is essential to teacher development, but that teachers must also be able to process their experiences in ways that allow time to reflect on their teaching in a systematic way. The internship sites created for master's level TESOL program students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania are described. Focus is on one of these sites, the American Language Institute (ALI). Activities at the ALI include teaching and tutoring, peer observation, action research projects, supervisory conference, teaching journals, and seminar discussions. Each activity is described and issues related to them are examined, including difficulties in collaboration in the observation process. Contains 52 references. (LB)

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Exploring Practical Teaching Opportunities

Jerry G. Gebhard

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EXPLORING PRACTICAL TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

Jerry G. Gebhard

My interest is in how we, as teacher educators, can provide opportunities for novice teachers to develop their beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as develop their teaching practices. My exploration into how I can provide such opportunities has led me to believe that practical teaching experience is essential to teachers' development. However, I also recognize that putting teachers into a teaching context is only part of the experience we can provide for them. We also need to provide chances for teachers to process their experiences in ways that allow them to consider and reflect on their teaching in a systematic way.

Based on the ideas of Gilbert Jarvis (1972) and John Fanselow (1987, 1988, 1992), I emphasize that at the heart of providing teachers with teaching opportunities and chances to systematically process and reflect on their teaching is the larger important goal of teaching them how to make their own informed teaching decisions. In short, at the end of their teaching experience, they should have a better idea about the importance of and ways to systematically consider their teaching beliefs and behavior on their own.

With this stance in mind, today I would like to begin with an overview of the internship program sites we have created for our MA TESOL program students at IUP. I will then focus attention on one of these sites, that of the American Language Institute, and I will explain how we work at providing opportunities for

novice teachers to gain teaching experience and also to consider and reflect on their experience. As I talk, I will also consider issues as they relate to our teacher education practices.

Overview of Internship Sites

Site	Types of Possible Teaching Experience
English Department ESL sections of Liberal Studies courses	* Tutoring/conferencing undergraduate ESL students 10 hours weekly outside class. * Assisting professor in class; 3 hours weekly. Actual supervised teaching opportunities in professor's class.
American Language Institute (ALI)	* Team teaching a course with another intern. * Team teaching a course with an experienced ALI teacher/mentor. * Tutoring 3-5 ALI students (as a part of the ALI students normal program). * Coordinating cultural events for the ALI students (i.e., trips; cultural events; sports events; guest speakers)
Critical Languages Program	* Teach a critical language (Japanese, Chinese, Hungarian, Italian, Russian) under the supervision of the Critical Languages Program Director and an MA TESOL Internship supervisor.
Internship Abroad Program (in process)	* Teach at a university or institute in Mexico, Hungary, China.

As the figure shows, we have established three sites and are working on the fourth, the Internship Abroad Program. Each site provides novice teachers with fourteen weeks of teaching experience, anywhere from 3 to 10 hours weekly.

Teaching at the American Language Institute (ALI)

As I pointed out, teachers in the internship program have

the chance to team teach or tutor at the ALI. However, this is only a part of their experience. We also aim at providing ways for teachers to consider and reflect on their teaching through a variety of teacher development activities, and again, the goal is to provide the kind of knowledge teachers need to have to be able to make their own informed teaching decisions.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES AT THE ALI

Activity	Description of Experience
Teaching/Tutoring	* Interns team teach a course or tutor.
Peer Observation	* Interns use knowledge gained in their Observation course (taken previously) to observe each other & other ALI teachers.
Action Research Projects	* Interns participate in an action research workshop with ALI teachers at the start of of the term, join a support team, initiate and conduct small scale action research projects, participate in team meetings to discuss research problems & give reports.
Supervisory Conferences	* Internship supervisor has interns read about "models of supervisory behavior". Each intern is asked to select the way she would most like to be supervised. During conferences, supervisor obliges. * Supervisor teaches interns a process of exploration, including how to collect descriptions of teaching, analyze these descriptions, and generate alternative teaching behaviors based on them.
Teaching Journals	* Interns write about, analyze, & synthesize their teaching experience at the ALI. Interns create a public version of their diaries for each other and other interns at different sites.
Seminar Discussions	* Interns from different sites meet to talk about teaching experiences, raise issues, and support each other.

These activities include doing peer observation, conducting action research projects, discussing teaching with a supervisor, keeping and sharing a teaching diary, and participating in seminar discussions. Although interns do not participate in all of these activities in a single semester of teaching, we do try to provide a variety of experiences based on these activities. Allow me briefly to explain what each activity includes, as well as introduce issues related to them.

Peer Observation

Before their internship, interns generally have taken a course called Observation of English Teaching. As such, they have already been introduced to observation processes and systems, as well as have had practice observing teaching from video tapes and in classrooms. As a part of their observation course, the interns have learned that there are a number of ways teachers can observe. One way is to take continuous notes of observed events. Short dialogues of interactions can be jotted down as well, and sketches can also be added. They also learn that to be more systematic, they can make use of observation instruments, such as check lists, observation guides, sign systems, and category systems.

However, when they are teaching at the ALI, some semesters we like to give interns (and regular ALI teachers) at least a few observation tasks. In doing so we emphasize two things. First, following Fanselow's (1988) idea, we want teachers to understand that teachers can see their own teaching in the teaching of

others, and when teachers observe others to gain self-knowledge, they have the chance to construct and reconstruct their own knowledge. In other words, we want the interns to observe other teachers to learn more about who they are as teachers and what they might do with their own students. "Wow! I never thought of doing that! What a neat idea! And look how this group of students like it. I bet my class would like this, too."

Second, we want teachers to understand that observation can be a collaborative effort, and during the past six years we have, off and on, tried a number of different observation schemes, all aiming at building a collaborative observation climate. For example, we have arranged for interns to pair up with experienced ALI teachers. The idea is for each to observe the other's class and to give descriptive feedback. Sometimes we ask them to inform the observer about what they might look for, for example, to keep a tally on which students the teacher calls on or to keep track of the teacher's questioning behaviors.

However, despite much effort on my part, for all intent and purposes, this plan has failed. Most teachers will not collaborate or observe unless forced to do so. Teachers say it takes too much time. This could be one reason. It does take time to plan the observation and give verbal or written feedback. I think the reason teachers do not heartily cooperate with the observation tasks is basically because the interns and ALI teachers fail to see the value of the observation assignment beyond an assignment. It seems to be accepted as a "let's get

this over with" attitude. As such, it seems that the task itself has no great significance or relevance to them. This is especially frustrating for me, as I personally find observation to be rewarding, in fact, as or more rewarding than reading and hearing about it. I believe the more knowledge about observation processes a teacher has, and the more times a teacher observes, the greater chances for him or her to see their own teaching clearly and differently.

Action Research Projects

In order to make the observations the interns (and other teachers) do more relevant, and thus hopefully generate more interest among the teachers, this past semester, I initiated a new element into the internship program at the ALI, that of action research projects. As action research is basically defined as self-reflective inquiry initiated by teachers for the purpose of improving their classroom practices, I hoped that teachers would find it more relevant to their needs and thus invest themselves in it more easily and whole heatedly than they had with the observation tasks.

During an initial two hour workshop, the interns (and other teachers) were given Strickland's (1988) action research guidelines: (1) identify an issue, (2) seek knowledge, (3) plan an action, (4) implement the action, (5) observe the action, (6) reflect on your observations, and (7) revise the plan. As Allwright and Bailey point out, such a process "allows teachers

who wish to investigate events in their own classrooms to take constructive steps towards solving immediate problems, systematically reflecting on the outcome" (1991:44).

The interns were then asked to join other ALI teachers to form a support team. Each teacher was expected to generate an action research problem or questions, as well as to work toward solving the problem by following Strickland's steps.
Although the semester has not ended yet, it is obvious that the interns (and other teachers), for the most part, have not only accepted the project as a part of their job responsibi'ities, but have understood the relevance of the projects to their teaching.

For example, one of the interns selected to study how she might improve the way she gives instructions in class. Although this is a simple idea, she has been challenged by it. She began by raising questions: How clearly do I communicate my intentions to the students? What makes some instructions clear to the students and others not clear? Will writing down my instructions on the board help? How do other teachers give clear instructions? After formulating these questions, she searched for answers, and this lead to her observing and analyzing the way her teaching partner and a highly experienced ALI teacher give directions. She also explored her own way of giving directions by tape recording herself, analyzing the way she gave classroom instructions and the consequences these ways seemed to have on the students, and trying out several new ways, for example having students paraphrase the instructions back to her and putting the

instructions on an overhead.

Supervisory Conferences

Questions internship supervisors often consider are, how can I reduce the threat associated with the traditional evaluative role of the teacher supervisor? How can I gain the trust of the interns? How can I work with an intern on his or her development while the at the same time evaluate the intern's progress with a grade at the end of the semester? Such questions are not easy to answer, but here I will attempt to answer the first one on reducing threat.

One way some internship supervisors work at reducing threat and gaining the trust of the teacher is to act in a nonthreatening way. Rather than acting in an authoritarian judgmental prescriptive way, telling interns how they should teach and visiting their class to see if they have complied, some supervisors will work at being nonjudgmental and nonprescriptive, and this can be done in a number of creative ways.

One way I try to reduce the treat of my role as supervisor is to make use of my experience with Counseling-Learning. Following the ideas of Charles Curran and Jennybelle Rardin, I accept each intern as a whole person who is entering the internship with experience as a student, attitudes toward and beliefs about language learning and teaching, and more. I work at listening to each intern, to attempt to understand the best I can who each person is. To do this, I paraphrase a lot to check my

understanding, and I let the interns know I genuinely want to see things from their point of view. In addition, I make use of techniques used by psychotherapists to build rapport, such as matching predicates and nonverbal behaviors, although this is quite controversial.

One way which I have recently initiated and which seems to have reduced the treat of my presence during classroom observations and teaching conferences, has been to have the interns tell me how they would like me to behave. I did this by having them read my article, "Creative behavior in teacher supervision" (Gebhard and Malicka, 1991), and based on the descriptions of supervisory behaviors in this article, I asked each of them to tell me which behaviors they preferred me to use when talking about their teaching. For example, two interns asked me to be "suggestive", providing them with several ways they could teach their lesson (or part of it) differently. Another intern liked the idea of my being "nondirective". He wanted me, through paraphrasing his thoughts back to him, to act as a mirror for him to reflect on his teaching. However, later he asked me to be more "collaborative", sharing my thoughts with him about how I might teach the same lesson.

Another way which seems to reduce threat, and be conducive to the goal of teaching the interns how to make their own informed teaching decisions, is to focus attention on teaching interns a way to explore their teaching, including a process through which they can make their own informed teaching

decisions. And, at the ALI, when possible, I teach interns a process of collecting descriptions of teaching, how to analyze these descriptions, and how to generate teaching behaviors based on the description and analysis. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into detail. However, this process is described and illustrated in John Fanselow's 1987 book Breaking Rules and in his 1988 TESOL Quarterly article "Let's see: Contrasting conversations about teaching", as well as in my 1991 article, "Freeing the teacher: A supervisory process" in Foreign Language Annals and in "The power of observation" by myself and Akiko Ueda, in David Nunan's 1993 book Collaborative language learning and teaching.

Teaching Journals

Another internship activity is keeping a teaching journal or diary. Following the ideas in Bailey (1990), we have interns write about their learning experiences, write about, analyze and interpret their teaching experiences, and create public versions of their journals for other interns to read. Interns at the ALI seem to like doing this and some have gone to great extremes to write in their journals on a daily basis, as well as create an open and quite analytical public version.

Last spring I attempted to initiate a collaborative journal, following the created efforts described in Brock et al (1992). I had three interns share a single journal, each writing in it and passing it along to another intern. The idea was for them to

write about their teaching experiences, as well as to react to each others'. However, although the project started out with enthusiasm, by mid-semester, the interns had practically stopped writing in it. They reported that they got too busy. But, I personally think their was an interpersonal conflict between the interns which affected their willingness to share their observations and experiences.

Seminar Discussions

As important, interns are given chances to talk about their teaching experiences during seminars, and I have discovered that talk can be a very powerful means for interns to understand much about their beliefs about teaching and teaching possibilities. I believe this is especially true if the teacher educator who runs the seminar is nonjudgmental and knows how to create an atmosphere conducive to interns talking about their teaching to other interns.

Some of seminar activities which interns have said were useful include:

* Studying transcripts of lessons taught by interns. Coding these transcripts with observation category systems, analyzing the coding for patterns, and making decisions about what teaching behaviors might break this pattern.
* Viewing video tapes of lessons (not taught by interns).
* Reading public versions of intern's journals.
* Micro-teaching short lessons while being video taped. Playing the tapes back and critiquing the lesson.

- Discussing teaching issues, for example, about whether or not errors should be treated, and if so, how, and how teachers can teach students to take on more responsibility for their own learning.

- Participating in professional development activities, such as those explained and illustrated in Pennington (1990), Ellis (1987), and Nunan (1990).

- Chatting about stress and how to relieve it.

CONCLUSION

Everything I do with interns is based on the idea that my job as a teacher educator is to empower teachers to know how to make their own informed teaching decisions. Providing teaching experiences alone is not enough. In addition to teaching, teachers need to be given chances to do such things as reflect on their teaching through journal writing, talk with other teachers about their teaching beliefs and practices, systematically observe other teachers (and themselves), carry out action research projects, and collaborate with a supervisor over how to describe, analyze, and interpret teaching, as well as how to generate their own teaching alternatives.

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